



December 22, 2023

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The Honorable Mayor Muriel Bowser
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, D.C. 20004

RE: FY25 Access to Justice Initiative Funding

Dear Mayor Bowser,

The community-based legal services delivered through the Access to Justice Initiative promote housing stability, public safety, and economic opportunity for District residents and make for a stronger DC. There is no other District program that ensures such a wide array of legal help is available to District residents. The District government's leadership in prioritizing this work is a testament to its commitment to an equitable DC for all. **Thank you.**

We respectfully request that you approve our FY25 budget request of \$31.7 million, which is equal to appropriations made to the Initiative in FY23 and FY24. As described further in our supporting materials, this includes \$20.35 million for the *Access to Justice Grants Program*, \$11 million for the *Civil Legal Counsel Projects Program*, and \$350,000 for the *DC Poverty Lawyers Loan Repayment Program*.

Sustained funding at this level is necessary to ensure that more than 30 Initiative-funded organizations continue to provide critical constituent services that District residents rely on to address problems that put their safety, families, homes, health, and economic well-being at risk. These problems often cannot be solved without *legal* help, making the Initiative uniquely essential. With your investment, the Initiative promotes partnerships with the District government and other organizations. **The Initiative works.**

The Initiative promotes housing stability. Recent program data shows that 81% of tenants facing eviction represented by Initiative grantees retained possession of their home. Where they didn't, there was often a mutually favorable settlement that mitigated the legal and financial consequences of an eviction for all parties. This data is consistent with past results.

The Initiative promotes public safety. Funded programs address the root causes of community conflict like domestic and gender-based violence, recidivism, and discrimination. One grantee alone offers ten legal clinics each week to support domestic violence survivors. By also promoting the health and well-being of District residents, Initiative programs decrease stress and advance more stable and resilient communities across all eight Wards.

The Initiative promotes economic opportunity for individuals and the community. Initiative programs promote economic well-being for individuals and the community at large. One program kept \$1.4 million in the pockets of 767 families facing debt and consumer cases last year. Another program reported that the equivalent of just under 2.5 lawyers secured over \$850,000 in vital public benefits for their clients. Community savings include \$14 million in Medicaid costs avoided by one organization over three years by keeping children out of hospitals and emergency rooms.

The Initiative also helps your constituents by reducing barriers that they face in accessing legal information and legal help. The Initiative's administrator, the DC Bar Foundation, partners with other District social services agencies to foster a more cohesive, connected continuum of support for District residents.

As you said during an event celebrating the work of the DC Bar Foundation: *"Affording [District residents] the legal representation and assistance they need is fundamental to upholding our DC values."* Thank you for your continued partnership with the Commission and the DC Bar Foundation to advance our shared vision for a more just, equitable community.

Sincerely,



Peter B. Edelman, Chair



James J. Sandman, Vice Chair

cc: Mr. Kevin Donahue, City Administrator
Ms. Lindsey Parker, Chief of Staff
Ms. Beverly Perry, Senior Advisor, Executive Office of the Mayor
Ms. Betsy Cavendish, General Counsel, Executive Office of the Mayor
Mr. Eugene Adams, Director, Mayor's Office of Legal Counsel
Mr. Tommy Wells, Director, Mayor's Office of Policy and Legislative Affairs
Ms. Lindsey Appiah, Deputy Mayor for Public Safety & Justice
Ms. Jennifer Porter, Director, Office of Victim Services & Justice Grants
Ms. Jennifer Reed, Director, Office of Budget and Performance Management

Ms. Kirra Jarratt, Chief Executive Officer, DC Bar Foundation
Ms. Danielle Reyes, President, DC Bar Foundation Board of Directors
Ms. Nancy Drane, Executive Director, DC Access to Justice Commission

FY25 PUBLIC FUNDING REQUEST FOR THE ACCESS TO JUSTICE INITIATIVE

Since fiscal year 2007, the Access to Justice Initiative (“Initiative”) has served as the District’s primary means to ensure that District residents otherwise unable to afford it have access to civil justice and free legal help. The Initiative promotes housing stability, public safety, and economic opportunity. District residents – including families, elders, and individuals with disabilities – rely on the program’s critical, constituent services. The Initiative’s strategic approach to addressing problems that put low-income and underserved District residents and our community is a model for the nation. The program currently falls within the purview of the Office of Victim Services and Justice Grants (“OVSJG”). The DC Bar Foundation (“DCBF”) has thoughtfully administered the Initiative since its inception.

FUNDING REQUEST

The District of Columbia Access to Justice Commission¹ requests that the District fund the Initiative at **\$31.7 million in FY25, equal to appropriations made to the Initiative in FY23 and FY24.**² We request local, recurring funding to replace local, one-time support utilized in FY24.³ The request breaks down as follows:

- **\$20.35 million for the Access to Justice Grants Program.** This funding will support several efforts including: (1) **\$16.35 million** for *access to justice grants* to maintain current support for civil legal services in communities of highly concentrated poverty; expand representation in housing matters; and maintain a legal interpreter bank; (2) **\$3 million** to support efforts targeted at *preventing eviction filings*; and (3) **\$1 million** to support the maintenance of a *coordinated intake and referral system* to improve District residents’ access to legal services and legal information. Funds will also support evaluations to better measure the impact and effectiveness of the program in meeting community needs.
- **\$11 million for the Civil Legal Counsel Projects Program.** This program funds legal help in eviction-related proceedings. This request for level funding will support eviction-related legal services to tenants at risk of eviction and the continued evaluation and assessment of the program.
- **\$350,000 for the DC Poverty Lawyers Loan Repayment Program.** This program assists lawyers who have committed to serving low-income District residents with student loan debt. This request for level funding will help nonprofit organizations recruit and retain a highly-qualified, diverse, and experienced pool of legal aid attorneys to deliver needed services to DC residents.

¹ Created by the DC Court of Appeals in 2005, the Commission addresses civil justice barriers experienced by low- and moderate-income DC residents and includes judges and staff from local courts and tribunals, private bar leaders, legal services representatives, law school faculty, and business and community leaders. Learn more at <https://dcaccesstojustice.org/>. Commissioner Karen Newton Cole, Executive Director of Neighborhood Legal Services Program, recused herself from approval of this submission due to Legal Services Corporation regulations.

² The FY24 Local Budget Act reads, “... provided, that \$31,667,840 shall be made available to award a grant to the District of Columbia Bar Foundation for the purpose of administering the Access to Justice Initiative, including the Access to Justice Grants Program, the District of Columbia Poverty Lawyer Loan Repayment Program, and the Civil Legal Counsel Projects Program; provided further, that the funds authorized for expenditure for the Access to Justice Initiative, including the Access to Justice Grants Program, the District of Columbia Poverty Lawyer Loan Repayment Assistance Program, and the Civil Legal Counsel Projects Program shall remain available for expenditure, without regard to fiscal year, until September 30, 2024.” Fiscal Year 2024 Local Budget Act of 2023, [Bill 25-161](#) (Signed by the Mayor on July 10, 2023).

³ The sources of the Initiative’s FY24 appropriation include \$14,327,038 in local recurring funds and \$17,340,802 in local one-time funds.

ABOUT THE INITIATIVE

KEEPING DISTRICT FAMILIES STABLY HOUSED

Initiative funds support a continuum of strategies that keep District families safely housed:

- Through the *Civil Legal Counsel Projects Program* (“CLCPP”), Initiative grantees provide legal help and representation to tenants facing eviction in DC Courts and in other eviction-related proceedings. 9,670 cases have been closed and 7,665 tenants served since the program began in fiscal year 2018. Recent program data shows that 81% of tenants facing eviction represented by Initiative grantees retained possession of the unit.
- Additional funding made available through the *Access to Justice Grants Program* since fiscal year 2022 supports other strategies and partnerships aimed at *preventing evictions and eviction filings from occurring*. In 2023 alone there have been more than 3,600 knocks on doors and more than 3,500 outreach letters sent to those facing eviction. More than 4,500 individuals have attended close to 200 community education sessions. With additional funding, grantee programs have hired Tenant Empowerment Specialists who help clients apply for rental assistance and public benefits, facilitate voucher transfers, work closely with emergency rental assistance providers to assist clients facing imminent eviction, and offer community trainings.
- The *Access to Justice Grants Program* supports other housing-related projects that keep District residents stably housed in affordable, healthy, safe, and discrimination-free environments.

Our FY25 funding request includes \$11M to support eviction-defense through the CLCPP program; \$3M to support eviction prevention efforts through the Access to Justice Grants program; and additional funding to support other housing-related efforts through the Access to Justice Grants program. To learn more about the Initiative’s housing strategies, see “Appendix A: Keeping District Families Stably Housed.”

PROMOTING PUBLIC SAFETY AND RESILIENCE

The Initiative supports a wide range of programs through the *Access to Justice Grants Program* that promote public safety, address family instability, and improve community well-being. Left unaddressed, problems that implicate these areas make our community vulnerable to crisis. Through successful intervention, they promote community resiliency and stability. Some examples of this life-changing work include:

- *Keeping individuals and families safe* through legal services and crisis safety planning for survivors of domestic violence, gender-based violence, and sex trafficking and exploitation.
- *Re-entry support for returning citizens* to help them transition back to the community after incarceration and navigate legal challenges in education, custody, employment, and consumer protection. Expungement work is also provided; studies show those who have their criminal records expunged are less likely to recidivate and more likely to receive higher future wages.
- *Promoting education opportunities for youth* including legal support to students and parents to prevent school exclusion and ensure access to a free and appropriate education.
- *Promoting family stability* through early intervention legal services for children and families at risk of entering foster care and other court-involved families, representation of District parents and caregivers trying to resolve family conflict or child support issues, and specialized support for custody-involved children and low-income, Black mothers.

- *Managing health crises* by helping District residents secure public benefits, gain access to housing, food, and medications, identify legal remedies to health problems like asthma, and by providing specialized services through medical-legal partnerships with District health systems.
- *Specialized support for individuals with disabilities*, including ensuring safe and healthy environments and combatting discrimination.
- *Assisting seniors aging in place* with estate planning, public benefits support, combatting fraud and abuse, and safekeeping intergenerational transfer of property.
- *Supporting the District's growing immigrant population* with legal help in combatting notario fraud, protecting unaccompanied minors, offering culturally specific legal services to targeted populations within the immigrant community, and helping the District respond to the nearly 11,500 migrants who have arrived in the District on buses sent from southern border states since April 2022.

Our FY25 funding request includes \$16.35M for the Access to Justice Grants program to support a wide range of projects, including those that promote public safety and resilience. To learn more about this funded work, see "Appendix B: Promoting Public Safety and Resilience."

PROMOTING ECONOMIC SECURITY FOR INDIVIDUALS AND THE COMMUNITY

Initiative programs funded through the *Access to Justice Grants Program* also lessen economic risk and inopportunity and promote community well-being and stability. Examples include:

- *Stabilizing credit for low-income residents and protecting critically needed funds* by fighting predatory lending and illegal debt collection schemes and averting negative court judgments and credit reports, including focused efforts in Wards 1, 4, 5, 7, and 8 and for those of modest means.
- *Protecting wages and jobs* by helping District residents recover stolen wages, fight discrimination and harassment, and seek assistance from employment-related programs.
- *Promoting economic security and lessening government burdens* by ensuring DC residents secure benefits for which they are entitled through advocacy and legal representation involving unemployment, TANF, SNAP, SSI, SSDI, rental subsidies, shelter services, and health benefits.
- *Preserving intergenerational homes* through heirs property and other probate-related work.
- *Offering services to individuals experiencing homelessness* to gain access to housing, employment, and other benefits.
- *Reducing health-related costs* by addressing health-harming problems that can be resolved through legal solutions.

Our FY25 funding request includes \$16.35M for the Access to Justice Grants program to support a wide range of projects, including those that promote economic security. To learn more about these strategies, see "Appendix C: Promoting Economic Security for Individuals and the Community."

BY THE NUMBERS

The Initiative's impact demonstrates its breadth and community reliance across all eight DC Wards:

| THE INITIATIVE'S IMPACT BY THE NUMBERS | | THE INITIATIVE'S IMPACT BY WARD | |
|---|---------------|------------------------------------|------------------------|
| CLIENTS SERVED - TOTAL INITIATIVE | | | |
| FY22 - 43,150 | | | |
| FY23 (January-June) - 18,010 | | | |
| CASES HANDLED - TOTAL INITIATIVE | | | |
| FY22 - 15,648 | | | |
| FY23 (January-June) - 9,455 | | | |
| COMMUNITY EDUCATION SESSIONS CONDUCTED | | | |
| FY22 - 690+ | | | |
| FY23 (January-June) - 680+ | | | |
| | | FY22 | FY23 (JAN-JUNE) |
| | WARD 1 | 6,209 | 2,341 |
| | WARD 2 | 2,123 | 1,150 |
| | WARD 3 | 1,086 | 524 |
| | WARD 4 | 6,045 | 1,878 |
| | WARD 5 | 4,732 | 2,147 |
| | WARD 6 | 3,664 | 1,489 |
| | WARD 7 | 6,608 | 3,642 |
| | WARD 8 | 8,818 | 3,557 |

SUPPORTING LANGUAGE ACCESS

The *Access to Justice Grants Program* also funds the Community Legal Interpreter Bank, a one-of-a-kind model operated by Ayuda that enables low-income residents who are limited English proficient or Deaf to access services from dozens of District nonprofit legal services providers. This is imperative to promote equity and procedural justice. In FY22, 29% of those served through the *Access to Justice Grants program* (or 11,731 of 40,836) (including those served by the Bank) and 14% of those served excluding the Bank (or 4,641 of 33,746) were low-income District residents with limited or no English proficiency. In the first half of FY23, that percentage was 30% (or 5,823 of 19,543) (including those served by the Bank) and 16% of those served excluding the Bank (or 2,633 of 16,353). Providers describe the Bank as an “indispensable” partner in their outreach and community engagement efforts, allowing them to conduct ‘Know Your Rights’ trainings over Zoom using simultaneous interpretation. Ensuring that these virtual meetings and presentations go smoothly requires training of the interpreters and the legal services providers.

The Community Legal Interpreter Bank offers:

- Dedicated support to funded organizations to ensure legal services are provided in the client's native language, with the most common languages being Spanish, Amharic, and French. 72 organizations were served in FY22; 39 thus far in FY23.
- Interpretation services offered by professionals specially trained in legal language interpretation, with 9,096 telephone interpretations offered in FY22 and 4,055 in the first half of FY23.
- Community education and other documents offered in multiple languages to promote client use and understanding, with 435 documents translated in FY22 and 105 in the first half of FY23.

MAKING LEGAL HELP MORE ACCESSIBLE

The *Access to Justice Grants Program* also reduces barriers that District residents face in accessing legal information and legal help, a vital constituent service. This includes a first-of-its-kind Coordinated Intake and Referral system where there will be ‘no wrong door’ for District residents to access legal help. Instead of being forced to contact multiple organizations, District residents seeking help will have a single point of entry – a phone number and website – where they'll be connected with someone who will listen to their problems and connect them with curated resources that will address their problems and facilitate a connection with a legal services provider. Fully visioned, this system could also connect District residents

with access to legal information and other supports. With a civil justice system as complex as the District's, this system is desperately needed. No other jurisdiction has attempted an approach at a scale the DC Bar Foundation contemplates for the District. A system pilot will launch in FY24, with a full launch in FY25.

Our FY25 funding request includes \$1M in Access to Justice Grants program funding to support Coordinated Intake and Referral. To learn more, see "Appendix D: Making Our Legal System More Accessible through Coordinated Intake and Referral."

RETAINING HIGHLY QUALIFIED, EXPERIENCED LAWYERS TO SERVE DISTRICT RESIDENTS

The DC Poverty Lawyer Loan Repayment Assistance Program ("DC LRAP") is a critical tool for maintaining a high-quality, diverse corps of legal services lawyers. With an average indebtedness of over \$100,000 and average salary of enrolled participants at \$72,545, this benefit enables attorneys to devote their skills to helping District low-income residents and helps legal services employers recruit and retain high-quality, experienced staff. This is critical when legal services salaries in DC are currently significantly below-market compared with their government or private sector peers.

Our FY25 funding request includes \$350,000 to support loan repayment for the District's legal services attorneys. To learn more, see "Appendix E: Retaining Highly Qualified, Experienced Lawyers."

MEETING THE GROWING NEED FOR LEGAL HELP

Despite the District's significant investment in the Initiative over time, the community need for these critical, free legal services continues to outpace available resources:

- *The need for representation in our courts and tribunals is great.* The most recently available data shows that rates of litigants in civil proceedings appearing in court without a lawyer are as high as 75-97% in DC Courts and at the DC Office of Administrative Hearings.
- *Eviction remains at crisis level.* Eviction case filings in 2023 seem certain to exceed the year prior; the average monthly rate of filings has on average risen by a third from 2022 to 2023. Funded organizations have seen a 50% increase in calls for assistance; there have been over 2,000 calls to the Landlord Tenant Legal Assistance Network in 2023. According to the most recent U.S. Census data, over 26,000 of those DC adults in rental housing surveyed reported being behind in rent with 11,000 of them saying it was "very" or "somewhat" likely that they'll have to leave their house within 2 months due to eviction. This comes as the initial funding for the Emergency Rental Assistance Program (ERAP) was fully depleted halfway through FY23.
- *Domestic violence remains a chronic, growing area of need.* One in four women in the District have experienced domestic violence, and cases have continued to rise in 2023, not letting up on the surge providers saw during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic as households faced increased economic strain and stay-at-home orders. One domestic violence provider handled 40-50% more clients in 2023 than the same period in 2022. The average monthly rate of domestic violence filings was up 65% at the beginning of 2023 compared with 2022. DC SAFE experienced 42,480 calls to their Crisis Response Line – the source of a majority of Initiative grantee referrals for Civil Protection Orders – in fiscal year 2023.
- *Economic stressors persist.* Consumer defaults are at their highest levels since the 2009 economic depression. One provider reported a 10% increase in requests for consumer debt legal help over the previous year. Across Wards 7 and 8, 78% of low-income residents are paying more than 30%

of their income on housing costs. Half of these residents have delinquent debt, with only 42% having at least \$2,000 in emergency savings.

- *Family conflict often requires legal intervention.* Stable families mean a stable community, but thousands of District residents face a wide range of family-related needs that require legal support. In D.C.'s Family Court, 83-93% of litigants lack counsel. The Initiative-funded Family Law Assistance Network has fielded close to 3,000 calls from District residents seeking this type of assistance since its inception in March 2020, with a 38% increase thus far this year.
- *Protecting intergenerational wealth in DC families.* The ability to navigate the probate system can mean the difference between keeping a multigenerational home in DC or losing it and being forced to leave the community. A lack of legal support in probate matters (as high as 97% in some cases) has been a long-standing civil justice gap, even with several new Initiative projects.

These are just a few examples of growing community need. To learn more, see "Appendix F: The Initiative's Role in Addressing Community Need."

APPROVING OUR FY25 BUDGET REQUEST IS NEEDED TO ENSURE INITIATIVE PROGRAMS CONTINUE

The Initiative uniquely increases access to justice in the District by expanding the capacity and reach of organizations to address District residents' legal needs through a continuum of services. The Initiative brings transformative solutions to problems that have long challenged District residents. With DCBF's leadership, the Initiative uniquely promotes collaborative planning and service delivery, where grantees come together through networks to collaborate, learn, and improve. Resources are used more efficiently when organizations are well-positioned to partner and promote collective learning, adopt consistent and effective best practices, and pursue economy of scale. This request will allow Initiative grantees to multiply successful interventions and develop new ones when the need is more profound than ever. DCBF is committed to ensuring that funded programs continue to effectively serve District residents.

FY25 funding will support more robust evaluation, a key component to the Initiative's success. The District's leadership and support allow the Initiative to incorporate strategic investments in learning, professional development, and evaluation that ensure continuous improvement of the work. Through its partnership with NPC Research,⁴ D.C. Bar Foundation continues to evaluate the impact of Initiative programs through tracking and assessing outcomes through client interviews; the impact of various forms of representation; the effectiveness of services; and how the work can make the District a more just and racially equitable community.⁵ Grantee organizations received training and technical assistance on collecting, analyzing, and using data to bring a data-informed perspective to their work and planning.⁶

There is no higher function of government than to ensure that all of its residents, no matter their economic status, have equal access to justice. You and the District government have embraced this most fundamental of obligations through your support of the Initiative.

We respectfully request that you approve our FY25 request of \$31.7 million to support strategies to serve the District's most vulnerable residents and enable them to participate fully in the District's recovery and renewal.

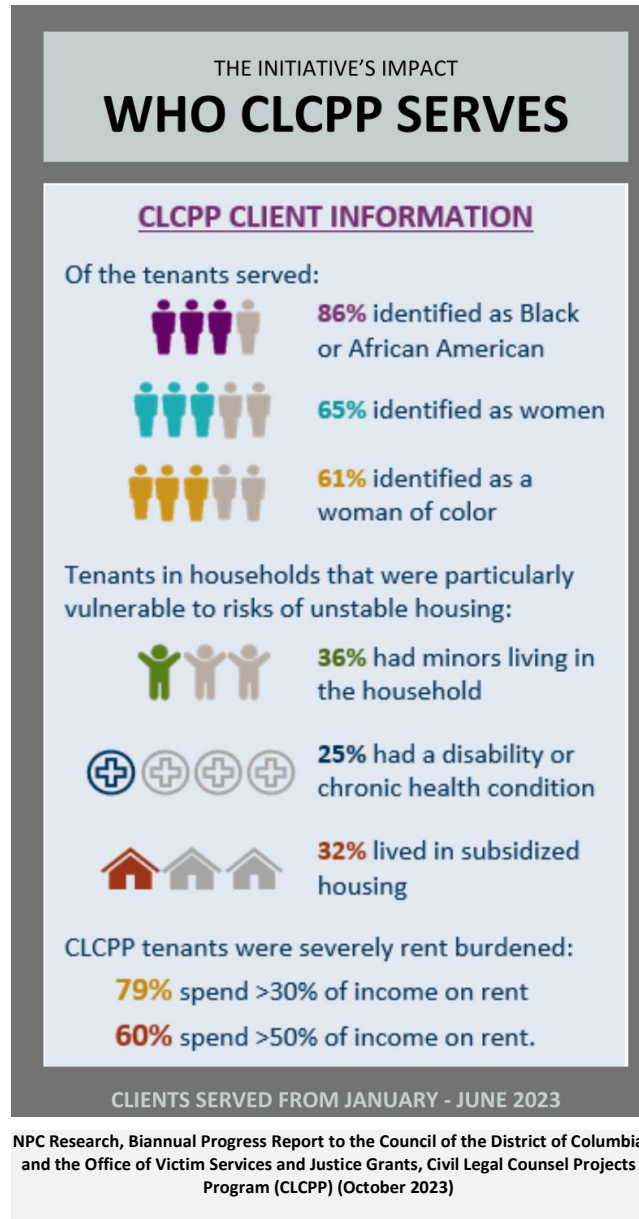
⁴ <https://npcresearch.com/>

⁵ NPC Research, [DC Bar Foundation's Family Law Learning Network: Summary Report](#) (October 2022).

⁶ NPC Research, [DC Bar Foundation's Family Law Learning Network: Litigant Perspectives on Remote Hearings in Family Law Cases](#) (December 2021).

APPENDIX A: KEEPING DISTRICT FAMILIES STABLY HOUSED

Initiative funds support a continuum of strategies that aim to keep District families safely housed. The *Civil Legal Counsel Projects Program* provides legal help and representation to tenants facing eviction matters in DC Courts and in other eviction-related proceedings; the *Access to Justice Grants Program* supports additional *prevention-based strategies and partnerships* aimed at stopping eviction filings from occurring; and the *Access to Justice Grants Program* also supports other housing-related projects aimed at keeping District residents stably housed in affordable, healthy, safe, and discrimination-free environments.



The need for expanded support in this area is urgent as ever. An increasing number of District residents, more than 44,000 in 2022, are “severely housing cost burdened,” meaning that they spent half or more of their income on rent.⁷ Twelve percent of District residents (or 82,452) are experiencing housing insecurity, meaning housing unaffordability, inadequate housing, or frequent and unwanted moves – with that burden largely falling on families, children, and youth; Black and Hispanic residents; and Ward 7 and 8 residents.⁸ In its 2023 publication of the annual *Out of Reach* report, the National Low Income Housing Coalition ranked the District as the sixth most expensive jurisdiction in the nation regarding rental housing, with the fair market rent for a 2-bedroom apartment in DC at \$1,838, and monthly income necessary to afford this rent without experiencing rental cost burden at \$6,126.⁹ In contrast, the median household income among CLCPP clients served is \$1,200 per month, with the median monthly income among all clients served since 2019 at \$1,054.¹⁰

The Initiative’s resources have positioned DCBF and Initiative grantees to play a facilitative role in addressing the District’s eviction crisis and fostering multi-sector collaboration between legal services providers, the courts, community-based organizations, other community leaders, and the District government.

Eviction defense is a necessary intervention, and our FY25 budget request seeks funding of \$11M for the *Civil Legal Counsel Projects Program* (“CLCPP”) to ensure District tenants facing

eviction matters in DC Courts have the legal help they need to protect their rights, assert legitimate defenses, and negotiate agreements that allow them to maintain their housing with achievable terms.

⁷ United Planning Organization, [DC is Not Making Progress on Affordable Housing for Those Who Need it Most](#) (September 2023).

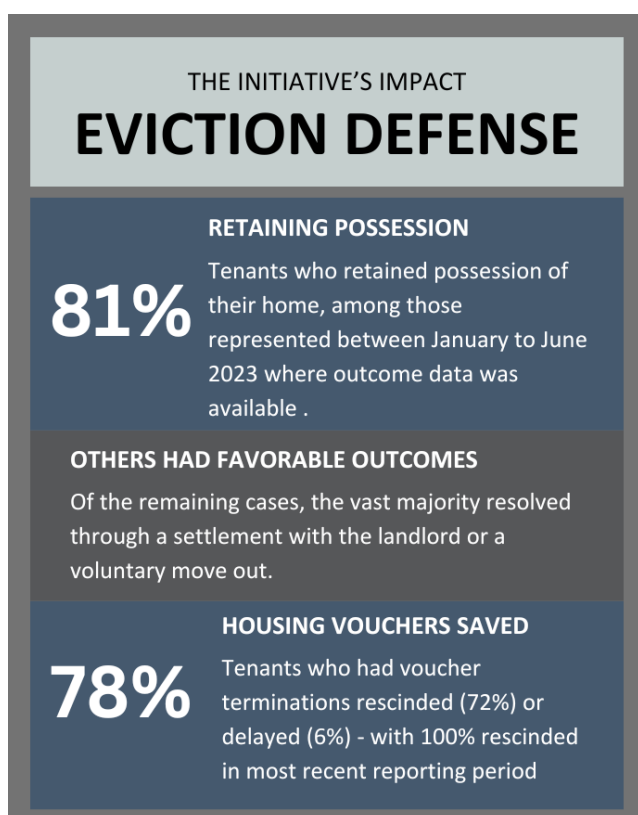
⁸ Claudia D. Solari, Lydia Lo, Alavi Rashid, Lynden Bond, Urban Institute, [Housing Insecurity in the District of Columbia](#) (November 16, 2023).

⁹ NPC Research, [Biannual Progress Report to the Council of the District of Columbia and the Office of Victim Services and Justice Grants, Civil Legal Counsel Projects Program \(CLCPP\) \(October 2023\)](#) at 8.

¹⁰ *Id.*

The critical nature of this support is demonstrated by the work accomplished through CLCPP, as outlined in greater depth in DCBF's comprehensive evaluation reports.¹¹

CLCPP grantees jointly maintain the Landlord Tenant Legal Assistance Network ("LTLAN"), a coordinated and accessible telephone-based intake and referral system for low-income litigants to be connected with an attorney from a CLCPP grantee organization. Grantees ensure LTLAN information is widely available, including through partnerships with community organizations, in mailed court documents about upcoming hearings, and through announcements during court hearings themselves. Since its launch in June 2020, LTLAN has fielded calls from well over 12,000 tenants and small landlords seeking help.¹² In the first half of 2023, 93% of clients reached CLCPP grantee organizations through LTLAN (69%) or called a funded organization directly (24%).¹³ Thus far in 2023, well over 3,500 intakes have been conducted through LTLAN.



NPC Research, *Biannual Progress Report to the Council of the District of Columbia and the Office of Victim Services and Justice Grants, Civil Legal Counsel Projects Program* (October 2023)

CLCPP grantees have a regular presence in court hearings to connect with unrepresented tenants to offer services. This includes remote hearings, where CLCPP grantees observe how the remote process is working for low-income tenants and offer suggestions for improvement. Judicial officers have found the CLCPP's role instrumental in serving court users during this challenging time. Robust data collection for the CLCPP program began in August 2019. Since that time and through June 2023, CLCPP grantees have closed 9,670 eviction, voucher termination, and other eviction-related cases, providing legal assistance to 7,665 low-income DC residents.¹⁴

CLCPP grantees participate in DC Superior Court's Landlord Tenant Working Group, its Landlord Tenant Rules Committee, and its Eviction Diversion Stakeholders Group to provide recommendations to the Court on process improvements. CLCPP grantees also continue to play a critical role in advocating for legislative protections for tenants.

attorneys, referring cases for representation whenever possible. Each year, CLCPP organizations host a five-part eviction law training series attended by pro bono attorneys and offer a series of courthouse tours.¹⁵

In order to leverage funds effectively, CLCPP organizations collaborate to train pro bono

¹¹ See [NPC Research, *Civil Legal Counsel Projects Program \(CLCPP\) Annual Evaluation Report, FY2021 \(October 2021\)*](#); [NPC Research, *Biannual Progress Report to the Council of the District of Columbia and the Office of Victim Services and Justice Grants, Civil Legal Counsel Projects Program \(CLCPP\) \(October 2022\)*](#); and [NPC Research, *Biannual Progress Report to the Council of the District of Columbia and the Office of Victim Services and Justice Grants, Civil Legal Counsel Projects Program \(CLCPP\) \(October 2023\)*](#). Another good exploration of these efforts is available at [Annemarie Cuccia, "We're Trying to Make it a Level Playing Field: How a New Hotline Helped Stop Two-Thirds of Evictions in DC," *The DC Line* \(August 22, 2022, updated December 9, 2022\)](#).

¹² Information on file at the DC Bar Pro Bono Center.

¹³ [NPC Research, *Biannual Progress Report to the Council of the District of Columbia and the Office of Victim Services and Justice Grants, Civil Legal Counsel Projects Program \(CLCPP\) \(October 2023\)*](#) at 10.

¹⁴ *Id.* at 5. The case volume and rate of closure was impacted by various stages of the pandemic.

¹⁵ *Id.* at 18.

The **Access to Justice Grants Program's additional investment in Eviction Prevention** allows DCBF and Initiative grantees to also pursue *prevention*-based strategies to halt evictions, including more directly involving non-legal, community-based organizations as partners. Our FY25 request of \$3M to specifically support eviction prevention efforts will allow Initiative grantees to continue work with canvassers to knock on doors and offer other support to ensure tenants at risk of eviction are aware of the availability of services to help.

Grantee organizations work to identify those tenants at risk of eviction by requesting and tracking data on pre-court notices served on tenants, new case filings, upcoming hearings, new judgments, and new writs, and then using this data to inform coordinated outreach with tenant canvassers, housing counselors, and relevant government agencies, including the Office of the Tenant Advocate.



Grantees ensure tenants are aware of their rights that may allow them to avoid eviction, critical when tenants often misunderstand relevant rules and renter protections that apply to them. This outreach includes sending postcards with tenants' rights information to buildings where tenants may be facing eviction; holding outreach sessions with tenant associations, tenant organizers, and other community service organizations; holding pop up events on-site at buildings; and using social media, mail, and community partners to educate the public. They also educate tenant organizers about the coordinated intake line they maintain so that this information is shared with tenants. Grantees participate in training and outreach events held by other community organizations, including Housing Counseling Services, the Latino Economic Development Center, DC Public Libraries, DC Public Schools Early Childhood program, local hospitals, and various school groups.

Initiative grantees approach this work holistically, also working to connect District residents with related supports that could help them become stably housed, such as disability, unemployment, and financial planning if facing long term financial issues; and help with issues that may affect housing stability, such as deep cleaning and therapy intervention for hoarding. With additional funding, Initiative grantees have been able to hire staff whose duties include connecting tenants to services that will help them remain stably housed.

DCBF co-leads the DC Eviction Prevention Working Group with the Greater Washington Community Foundation and with support from the Urban Institute, a group set up after the White House's Eviction Prevention Summit. Here, Initiative grantees help lead strategic partnering between lawyers, housing providers and landlords, the District government, housing counselors and organizers, and the Court to reach tenants in the community with a goal of avoiding eviction. The Working Group has developed a multi-faceted collaborative framework that calls for increased community outreach and education, more partnering between Initiative grantees and community-based canvassers, and more engagement with housing providers and tenants alike before landlords file eviction actions.

Finally, securing affordable housing goes beyond eviction prevention. FY25 support for the **Access to Justice Grants Program** will support numerous other housing strategies grantees employ to keep District residents in safe, healthy housing, including:

THE INITIATIVE'S IMPACT

HEALTHIER HOMES

ATTACKING HEALTH DISPARITIES
Children with asthma in Wards 7 and 8 are 20 times more likely to end up in the ER for asthma than a child growing up in Ward 3

LEGAL INTERVENTIONS MEAN HEALTHIER CHILDREN
Children's health improves – sometimes within days – after the conditions are addressed.

COMBATTING HOUSING CODE VIOLATIONS
Mold, lead, and vermin exacerbate asthma and lead to emergency room visits and hospitalizations.

ECONOMIC BENEFITS ARE CLEAR
A legal intervention, alongside medical treatment, keeps children out of the hospital and emergency room and results in significant Medicaid cost avoidance – on average \$10,000 in the first 18 months alone for housing conditions cases

Children's Law Center, [Cost Avoidance Associated with Medical-Legal Partnership Intervention for Children with Asthma](#); Washington Business Journal, [Mold in the walls could be triggering your child's asthma attack. Here's what a new D.C. partnership is doing about it](#) (August 28, 2019)

- helping tenants facing environmental health hazards and unsafe and unhealthy housing conditions secure health-saving improvements from landlords and property owners through individual and building-wide advocacy;
- keeping families in their historic communities through work in foreclosure and estate administration at a time when intergenerational housing and communities are at risk of gentrification;
- promoting housing preservation by safeguarding low-equity housing cooperatives, tenant organizations, and other groups that keep District residents in their homes;
- supporting fair housing and combatting housing-based discrimination;
- keeping tenants in their housing by combatting illegal rent increases and unlawful voucher terminations; and
- working with individuals experiencing homelessness to provide holistic, legal support to address issues like access to public benefits, estate planning and probate, housing, and record sealing.

APPENDIX B: PROMOTING PUBLIC SAFETY AND RESILIENCE

The Initiative supports a wide range of programs that are specifically targeted to promote public safety, address family instability, and improve community well-being through the *Access to Justice Grants Program*. Left unaddressed, these issues make our community vulnerable to crisis. Through successful intervention, they promote community resiliency and stability. Some examples of the ways the program promotes public safety and resilience include:

- *Keeping individuals and families safe.* Grantees offer trauma-informed services to survivors of domestic and gender-based violence in all eight Wards. Grantees have mobilized to offer support in the form of emergency legal services and crisis safety planning and have launched new and expanded virtual and in-person clinics to meet the growing need. Court-based services are essential when the most recently available data¹⁶ show that 88% of petitioners in domestic violence matters seeking civil protection orders lack counsel. Specialized services also support survivors of sex trafficking, sexual exploitation, and victims of crime.
- *Re-entry support for returning citizens.* Several projects provide support to individuals transitioning back to the community after being detained in local or Federal juvenile, residential, or adult facilities through legal support in education, custody, employment, consumer, and post-incarceration issues. Specialized support for women returning from incarceration in issues like expungement, name change, probation issues, child support, child custody, consumer issues, and more is also offered. Programs also offer support in expungement and record sealing. A 2020 study found that there is a significantly lower recidivism rate among those who have their criminal records expunged. The study also found “sharp upturns” in wage and employment trajectories for those who obtained expungement relief, finding that “on average, within on year of expungement wages go up by over 22% versus the pre-expungement trajectory.”¹⁷
- *Promoting education opportunities for youth.* Initiative funds support legal services to parents and students to ensure that they are free from school exclusion and have access to a free and appropriate education, including special education and related services, language access, and other required supports to promote successful educational and life outcomes. Other services specifically target court-involved youth or youth at risk of court involvement.
- *Promoting family stability.* The Initiative supports a wide range of programs that promote family stability. At least three programs aim to prevent children from entering the foster care system through early intervention legal services at key points of instability, legal support for relative caregivers seeking to step in to care for children whose parents are unable to care for them, and support to parents whose families are at risk of entering the foster care system. A network of providers also provides representation to District residents trying to resolve family conflict in the DC Superior Court, with a separate program aimed at providing specialized, trauma-informed support to children involved in custody disputes who are identified as being in critical need of representation. Representation of parents and primary caregivers with child support issues is also provided, notable where 80-97% of litigants traditionally pursue these cases without legal help.¹⁸ In 2023, the Family Law Assistance Network (FLAN) expanded beyond remote services to meet the demand for legal assistance. In addition to operating a Hotline and email referral system four days per week, FLAN now operates an in-person walk-in center within D.C. Superior Court, with plans to staff this in-person on site additional days per week in 2024.

¹⁶ [D.C. Access to Justice Commission, *Delivering Justice: Addressing Civil Legal Needs in the District of Columbia* \(December 2019\) at 204.](#) A summary of representation rates in DC Courts and the DC Office of Administrative Hearings is available at https://dcaccessjustice.org/reports_extra.html

¹⁷ Prescott, J., Starr, S., [Expungement of Criminal Convictions: An Empirical Study](#), Harvard Law Review, 133, no. 8 (2020) at 2460-2555.

¹⁸ *Id.*

- *Managing health crises.* Funds support medical-legal partnerships that place lawyers alongside medical staff at some of the District's highest-volume primary care providers, including projects that offer specialized services to children, pregnant and postpartum individuals, and the transgender community. Legal services providers continue to help low-income DC residents stay stable and healthy by pursuing and maintaining local and Federal benefits and gaining access to housing, food, and medications, as they continue to identify legal remedies for health problems, such as uncontrolled asthma due to mold-infested homes.
- *Specialized support for individuals with disabilities.* The Initiative supports a wide range of projects aimed at serving individuals with disabilities, including ensuring the least-restrictive options for those facing undue adult guardianship, assisting those facing housing challenges due to mental illness or behavioral challenges, and combatting discrimination based on disability or medical status.
- *Assisting seniors aging in place.* Low-income seniors get support in drafting wills and advance directives, renewing public benefits, fighting scams, and dealing with housing-related issues. Probate is a long-standing gap in our civil legal services network. While for years there was only one legal services provider offering services in probate matters, expanded Initiative funds have allowed more legal services providers to develop a practice in this area. Low-income, Black, and Latinx populations are less likely to have wills and estate plans, leading to complex probate proceedings after a death in the family and threatening intergenerational transfer of property. Legal help to navigate these complicated systems is essential.
- *Support to the District's growing immigrant population.* Initiative funds support legal help to combat notario fraud, protect unaccompanied minors, offer culturally specific legal services to targeted populations within the immigrant community, and help the District respond to the nearly 11,500 migrants who have arrived in the District on buses sent from southern border states since April 2022. The work not only navigates the complexities of immigration challenges but also prioritizes the safety, security, and holistic well-being of migrants. By providing essential legal services, fostering cultural competence, and building community networks, this work contributes significantly to the successful integration of recently arrived migrants into the community.

APPENDIX C: PROMOTING ECONOMIC SECURITY FOR INDIVIDUALS AND THE COMMUNITY

Initiative programs funded through the *Access to Justice Grants Program* referenced above also lessen economic risk and inopportunity and promote community well-being and stability:

- Stabilizing credit for low-income residents and helping protect critically needed funds.*** Funded programs help residents fight predatory lending and illegal debt collection schemes and avert negative court judgments and credit reports, which can affect housing and employment opportunities – included focused community efforts in Wards 1, 4, 5, 7, and 8. They also seek to avert or minimize the extraction of wealth from DC residents by debt collectors, which occurs disproportionately against Black and Latinx DC residents. The District saw an alarming number of these consumer problems before the pandemic, and providers have since faced more consumer and debt-related legal issues as billing cycles and wage loss create a toxic personal financial environment for thousands of already vulnerable DC residents. With pandemic-related moratoria lifted, providers are addressing increased consumer and collections cases as community members begin to receive medical and collection bills; health care has become the country's largest source of debt in collections. These concerns are particularly acute for the undocumented, who have always been highly susceptible to exploitation and fraud. Six Initiative grantees partnered to establish the DC Debt Collection Hotline, which has already served thousands of residents, and, as cases continue to spike, is the phone number provided by D.C. Superior Court to litigants facing debt collection lawsuits. One program kept \$1.4 million in the pockets of 767 families facing debt and consumer cases last year.

THE INITIATIVE'S IMPACT

ECONOMIC IMPACT

PROMOTING INDIVIDUAL SECURITY

One program kept \$1.4 million in the pockets of 767 families facing debt and consumer cases last year.

BENEFITS SECURED

Another program reports that the equivalent of just under 2.5 lawyers secured over \$850,000 in vital public benefits for their clients.

MEDICAID SAVINGS FOR THE COMMUNITY

One grantee tracked its impact and found that community savings include \$14 million in Medicaid costs avoided over three years by keeping children out of hospitals and emergency rooms. A legal intervention, alongside medical treatment, keeps children out of the hospital and emergency room and results in significant Medicaid cost avoidance – on average \$10,000 in the first 18 months alone for housing conditions cases

- Protecting wages and jobs.*** These funds help teach low-income workers their rights, ensure they receive the wages they have earned and help them recover stolen wages, and fight discrimination and harassment. Unemployment in the District has always been high, with a disproportionate impact on people of color. Requests for legal assistance have clustered around unemployment insurance, terminations, and failures to pay wages or other benefits. Even before the pandemic, litigants in unemployment-related matters at the DC Office of Administrative Hearings were unrepresented by counsel 91% of the time.¹⁹ Specialized employment programs support working mothers within the District's immigrant community and those seeking assistance in applying for paid family leave benefits, and address discriminatory practices in the workplace in order to reduce income inequality and the racial income gap.

¹⁹ *Id.* at 210.

- *Preserving intergenerational homes through heirs property and other probate related work.* The District has prioritized maintaining and growing Black homeownership. The ability to navigate the probate system can mean the difference between keeping a multigenerational home in DC or losing it and being forced to leave the community. A lack of legal support in probate matters (as high as 97% in some cases) has been a long-standing civil justice gap, but a growing number of Initiative projects offer support in this area.
- *Promoting economic security.* Helping District residents secure benefits for which they are entitled has always been an important part of this program. Providers play a critical role in working with government agencies like DHS and the DHCF to ensure that benefit programs are accessible to the client community. There is a large gap in services for District residents navigating issues at the DC OAH, which hears cases relevant to vital public benefits such as unemployment insurance, TANF, SNAP, rental subsidies, shelter services, and health benefits – a gap that providers struggle to fill.²⁰ The equivalent of just under 2.5 lawyers at one program secured more than \$850,000 in vital public benefits for their clients. There also is funding to support services to those experiencing homelessness to provide holistic, legal support to address issues ranging from public benefits, estate planning, probate, housing, and record sealing.
- *Reducing health-related costs* by addressing health-harming problems that can be resolved through legal solutions. For example, grantee programs help District families address housing code violations or other environmental health hazards that often exacerbate medical conditions like asthma. One grantee tracked its impact and found that community savings include \$14 million in Medicaid costs avoided over three years by keeping children out of hospitals and emergency rooms.

²⁰ *Id.*

APPENDIX D: MAKING OUR LEGAL SYSTEM MORE ACCESSIBLE

The *Access to Justice Grants Program* also supports strategies to make civil justice more accessible to District residents, including Coordinated Intake and Referral. No system works if it is not connected to the people who need it. For twenty years, our legal community has talked about developing a system that would make it easier for District residents to access help, without success. From a user perspective, solutions to problems – even if they are recognized as legal problems (and often they are not) – are not easy to find. There are countless phone calls, online or in-person intakes, shuffling from organization to organization to get help. Often those efforts are ultimately unsuccessful. With the dizzying array of organizations that offer help in the District, this quest can be even more daunting. For District residents to have a justice experience that meets them where they are and provides them the help they need, when and where they need it, we need a more coordinated, strategic approach.

DCBF is now leading an effort to do just that. The vision is that for District residents, there will be ‘no wrong door’ to accessing help. In this vision, a District resident seeking help will have a single point of entry – and phone number or a website – where they’ll be connected with someone who will listen to their problems and connect them with curated resources that will address those problems and facilitate a connection with a legal services provider that may have the capacity to help. No other jurisdiction has attempted an approach at the scale DCBF contemplates for the District. A pilot of the system will occur during FY24, with a full launch in FY25.

In August and September 2022, DCBF released two critical reports that are informing the development of our community's long-awaited system. The first report is based on client and community member focus groups, and the second report captures input on the system design from legal services providers, allied organizations, and individuals.²¹ Another related report was released in November 2023.²²

This effort to develop a coordinated intake and referral system is deeply connected to DCBF’s efforts to transform our civil legal aid network to involve other community partners who serve District residents. The success of the system will be fully realized only if District residents and the non-legal professionals who serve them know how to access it. While Initiative grantees often partner with non-legal community organizations in the District to serve DC residents more directly – medical-legal partnerships being a perfect example – this work needs to be expanded and appropriately resourced to be effective.

The District first provided dedicated funding to support this effort since FY23. For FY25, we are asking for \$1 million to ensure the effort is sustained into the future after its 2024 implementation.

²¹ NPC Research & DC Bar Foundation, [Designing a Coordinated Intake and Referral \(CIR\) System in the District of Columbia: Client and Community Member Input](#) (July 2022) and NPC Research & DC Bar Foundation, [Designing a Coordinated Intake and Referral \(CIR\) System in the District of Columbia: Input from Legal Services Providers and Allied Organizations](#) (August 2022).

²² NPC Research & DC Bar Foundation, [Designing a Coordinated Intake and Referral System in the District of Columbia: Summary of Input Gathered from DC Residents](#) (November 2023).

APPENDIX E: RETAINING HIGH QUALITY, EXPERIENCED LAWYERS

The high quality of these services is dependent on the professionals who deliver them. A hallmark of the Initiative is DCBF's investment in professional training and support to grantee organizations and their staff.

Since its inception, the *DC Poverty Lawyer Loan Repayment Assistance Program* ("DC LRAP") has served as a critical tool for recruiting and maintaining a high quality, diverse corps of legal services lawyers. The District has recently experienced growth in the need for and hiring of attorneys in the legal aid market. These professionals support residents facing a wide range of civil legal problems and other inequities in our legal system, yet their salaries lag below market and far behind their government and private sector peers. With an average indebtedness of the 49 attorney beneficiaries of approximately \$100,000 and the average salary of enrolled participants at \$72,545, this program is essential to enabling attorneys to devote their skills to helping the District's vulnerable population. *To continue to support the work of attorneys in legal aid and deliver needed services to DC residents, we request LRAP funding of \$350,000 for FY25.*

DCBF also provides support to these lawyers through trainings and technical assistance. DCBF sponsors multiple trainings each year and subsidizes the tuition fee for grantee staff to attend select legal skills trainings offered by other organizations in the District. DCBF also provides one-time funding for peer evaluations and consultants when grantees need technical assistance.

DCBF has invested additional resources in providing racial equity training to grantees, recognizing that civil justice is a racial equity imperative in a community like DC where communities of color disproportionately experience civil justice challenges. DCBF conducted a grantee diversity survey in April 2021 to collect demographic data on staff, leadership, and board compositions, knowing that advancing racial equity in the civil legal aid network means becoming as diverse as the community we serve. Now in its fifth year, DCBF has continued to offer grantees a four-part training series on racial equity and racial justice facilitated by the organization Service Never Sleeps²³ and launched a five-part training series in partnership with the Interaction Institute for Social Change²⁴ to build grantee staff capacity to design and facilitate productive conversations about race, racism, and racial justice. DCBF is also working with grantees to design a Racial Equity Learning Network.²⁵

²³ <https://serviceneversleeps.org/>

²⁴ <https://interactioninstitute.org/>

²⁵ You can learn more about DCBF's efforts in this area at <https://www.dcbf.org/post/our-racial-equity-journey>.

APPENDIX F: THE INITIATIVE'S ROLE IN ADDRESSING COMMUNITY NEED

Despite the District's significant investment in the Initiative over time, the community need for these critical, free legal services continues to outpace available resources. The District's investments have allowed DCBF to expand necessary interventions to get closer to meeting the demand for legal help and address persistent gaps in legal services delivery. There is no doubt that even an appropriation at funding level to FY24 will leave thousands of District residents needing help unserved.

The Commission's *Delivering Justice* report²⁶ described the civil justice crisis facing the District before the pandemic. Initiative grantees report that requests for help continue to increase, with vulnerable populations like District elders, those living with disabilities, and the immigrant population particularly susceptible to legal risk. Even cases that have not grown in number have demanded greater capacity to service them, with hearing preparation and participation taking longer in the virtual context. Our post-pandemic world has created a new 'normal' whereby legal services providers are serving clients simultaneously in both remote and in-person environments.

Here are some snapshots of needs identified by Initiative grantees:

- *The need for representation in our courts and tribunals is great.* The most recently available data shows that rates of litigants in civil proceedings appearing in court without a lawyer are as high as 75-97% in DC Courts and at the DC Office of Administrative Hearings.²⁷
- *Eviction remains at crisis level.* Eviction case filings in 2023 seem certain to exceed the year prior; the average monthly rate of filings has on average risen by a third from 2022 to 2023.
 - According to U.S. Census data, 26,000 of those DC adults in rental housing surveyed reported being behind in rent and 11,000 reported it was "very" or "somewhat" likely that they'll have to leave their house within 2 months due to eviction - the vast majority of whom are District residents of color.²⁸ This comes as the initial funding for the Emergency Rental Assistance Program (ERAP) was fully depleted halfway through FY23.
 - According to the DC Fiscal Policy Institute, nearly two-thirds of extremely low-income DC families pay half or more of their limited cash income towards rent.²⁹ An increasing number of District residents, more than 44,000 in 2022, are "severely housing cost burdened," meaning that they spent half their income on rent.³⁰ Twelve percent of District residents (or 82,452) are experiencing housing insecurity, meaning housing unaffordability, inadequate housing, or frequent and unwanted moves – with that burden largely falling on families, children and youth; Black and Hispanic residents, and Ward 7 and 8 residents.³¹

²⁶ D.C. Access to Justice Commission, *Delivering Justice*, *supra* note 16.

²⁷ *Id.* A summary of representation rates in DC Courts and the DC Office of Administrative Hearings is available at https://dcaccesstojustice.org/reports_extra.html

²⁸ U.S. Census Bureau, Household Pulse Survey (Week 63: October 1-30), *Table 1b: Last Month's Payment Status for Renter Occupied Housing Units*, available at <https://www.census.gov/data/tables/2023/demo/hhp/hhp63.html>

²⁹ DC Fiscal Policy Institute, *DC Affordable Housing Toolbox* (April 2019).

³⁰ United Planning Organization, *DC is Not Making Progress on Affordable Housing for Those Who Need it Most* (September 2023).

³¹ Claudia D.Solari, Lydia Lo, Alavi Rashid, Lynden Bond, Urban Institute, *Housing Insecurity in the District of Columbia* (November 16, 2023).

- In its 2023 publication of the annual *Out of Reach* report, the National Low Income Housing Coalition ranked the District of Columbia as the sixth most expensive jurisdiction in the nation regarding rental housing wages, with the fair market rent for a 2-bedroom apartment in DC at \$1,838, and monthly income necessary to afford this rent without experiencing rental cost burden at \$6,126.³² In contrast, the median household income among CLCPP clients served is \$1,200 per month, with the median monthly income among all clients served since 2019 at \$1,054.³³
 - Across Wards 7 and 8, 78% of low-income residents are paying more than 30% of their income on housing costs. Half of these residents have delinquent debt, with only 42% having at least \$2,000 in emergency savings.³⁴
 - Funded organizations have seen a 50% increase in calls for assistance; there have been over 3,500 calls to the Landlord Tenant Legal Assistance Network in 2023 – and well over 12,000 since the legal line was established in June 2020.
- *Domestic violence remains a chronic, growing area of need.*
 - One in four women in the District have experienced domestic violence, and cases have continued to rise in 2023, not letting up on the surge providers saw during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic as households faced increased economic strain and stay-at-home orders.
 - One domestic violence provider handled 40-50% more clients in 2023 than the same period in 2022. The average monthly rate of domestic violence filings was up 65% at the beginning of 2023 compared with 2022.
 - DC SAFE experienced 42,480 calls to their Crisis Response Line – the source of a majority of Initiative grantee referrals for Civil Protection Orders – in fiscal year 2023.³⁵
 - One organization is on track to co-counsel with 450+ volunteer attorneys (for an equivalent of over 35,000 donated hours of legal services) to better meet client needs.
 - *Economic stressors persist.*
 - Some providers reported a 10% increase in requests for consumer debt legal help over the previous year. In Wards 7 and 8, 50% of people have some form of delinquent debt.³⁶
 - Consumer defaults are at their highest levels since the 2009 economic depression.³⁷
 - More than 100 foreclosures were filed in the District in June 2023 alone, with the District placing between the 9th and 10th states with the highest rates of foreclosure in the country.³⁸

³² NPC Research, *Biannual Progress Report to the Council of the District of Columbia and the Office of Victim Services and Justice Grants, Civil Legal Counsel Projects Program (CLCPP) (October 2023)* at 8.

³³ *Id.*

³⁴ Miranda Santillo, Mingli Zhong, Oriya Cohen, Urban Institute, *Washington, DC, Has Glaring Financial Health Inequities. So Do Most American Cities* (October 6, 2022).

³⁵ DC Safe, *DC Safe FY23 By the Numbers*

³⁶ Miranda Santillo, Mingli Zhong, Oriya Cohen, Urban Institute, *Washington, DC, Has Glaring Financial Health Inequities. So Do Most American Cities* (October 6, 2022).

³⁷ See, e.g., Federal Reserve Bank of New York, Liberty Street Economics, *Credit Card Delinquency Continues to Rise* (November 7, 2023)

³⁸ <https://www.sofi.com/learn/content/foreclosure-rates-for-50-states/>

- *Family conflict often requires legal intervention.*
 - Providers report increases in calls for help in the range of 50-100% higher than in 2022.
 - In D.C.'s Family Court, 83-93% of litigants lack counsel.
 - The Initiative-funded Family Law Assistance Network has fielded close to 3,000 calls from District residents seeking this type of assistance since its inception in March 2020, with a 38% increase thus far this year. The FLAN hotline receives an average of 25-40 calls per day.
- *Probate-Related Needs Continue.*
 - A report issued jointly by the Council for Court Excellence and the D.C. Access to Justice Commission calls on the legal and philanthropic community to expand support for legal services in probate and estate administration among other reforms.³⁹
 - One organization's 'Legal Information Help Line' received 1,619 calls regarding probate or life planning issues over a two-year period. In 2022, 4 of every 10 resources accessed on LawHelp.org/DC were related to probate.
- *District residents require help navigating critical government programs and benefits.*
 - More clients with disabilities are seeking help with supported decision-making and recovering stolen benefits.
 - With Medicaid recertification and Medicaid-funded services under renewed scrutiny, District residents with health needs require help addressing errors and litigating factual disputes on the necessity of services. Litigants appealing public benefits decisions at the D.C. Office of Administrative Hearings are unrepresented 86% of the time.

These are just a few reasons why Initiative grantees report an increasing and more complex level of community need for civil legal help, **and underscores the need to approve our FY25 budget request of \$31.7M.**

³⁹ [Council for Court Excellence and D.C. Access to Justice Commission, *Strengthening Probate Administration in the District of Columbia* \(February 2022\).](#)